FROM THE DESK OF THE CEO (3/19)

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"Africa is too rich to be poor" Ben Murray Bruce, Nigeria

DAFF MINISTERS SERVICE DELIVERY FORUM

As part of the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) schedule of events a Service Delivery Forum is convened to provide feedback to constituents, and to hear from the constituents what issues DAFF needs to address. Fruit South Africa was privileged to be the sponsor for the Ministers Service Delivery Forum which was held on Wednesday 16 January 2019 in the Western Cape. The schedule of events kicked off sharply at 08h00 in the beautiful village of Grabouw – home to Two-A-Days impressive packhouse and facilities. HORTGRO organised an excellent program of presentations – which included workers, black growers and the hosts (Two-A-Day). The range of corporate social responsibility programs presented showed the commitment towards inclusive growth in the fruit industry. A visit to the packhouse illustrated the capital and technology intensive nature of the fruit industry, while the orchard visit highlighted the complex nature of fruit farming.

The Service Delivery Forum took place at the Erinvale Hotel in Somerset West, and was attended by stakeholders from agriculture, forestry and fisheries. As sponsor of the event Fruit South Africa was given an opportunity to address the meeting. The following was highlighted:

- The fruit sector in South Africa is going through a growth phase, significant plantings in many fruit types are reaching maturity, resulting in increased marketable volumes in the next few years.
- It is essential that industry and DAFF work together to gain, retain and optimise market access to ensure that this additional growth is marketed with reasonable returns back to the farm.
- Protectionism is increasing around the world, impacting access to many markets. Developed countries are using technical barriers to trade, while less sophisticated markets are using tariffs as a means of limiting trade.
- The Minister was thanked for his leadership, and particularly in visiting and trying to unlock market access issues in key South African fruit markets (Thailand, USA and China were mentioned).
- This political will from the Minister needs to energise the entire department if we are to benefit from the growing marketable volumes. Competitors are working hard to increase their market share – a new sense of urgency is required if South Africa is to remain competitive.
- The labour intensive nature of the fruit industry means that growth leads to job creation.
- The export focus of the fruit industry makes it a key driver for South African economic growth.
- The capital and technology intensive nature of the industry means that industry and government need to work closely with new entrants into the industry, to supply them with the support and mentoring that will allow them to be successful.
- The fruit industry is ready to enter public private partnerships to ensure that the volume increase results in inclusive growth.

The Statistician General presented on the census on commercial agricultural farmers – stressing the importance of reliable statistics, and explaining the independent and confidential nature of the process. Growers must assist in this process so that reliable agricultural statistics can be gathered. This census was started 100 years ago, and has been repeated every five years since then. An interesting statistic is that agriculture represents 2.6% of the GDP, but 5.1% of employment (compared to mining at 2.5%).

The Minister did touch on concerns regarding expropriation without compensation. He reassured farmers that productive farms were not in any danger of being expropriated, but urged farmers to get involved in land reform and upliftment projects.

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